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ABSTRACT

This paper reports on the preliminary results of an ongoing long-term study of the role of coaches from the Center for Collaborative Education (CCE) in facilitating whole-school reform. The paper also presents a glimpse into the work of coaches at a very specific time in their work, both with schools and in their own understanding of coaching. The report focuses on two points: (1) how coaches assist and enhance schools' efforts at reform, that is, what kinds of activities coaches engage in, how these activities facilitate change, and what coaches think about these activities; and (2) how coaches' activities are grounded in CCE's core school-based practices. Data for the study were collected from the logs of, interviews with, and observations of 18 coaches. (Appended are a sample coach's log and the interview protocol.) Following are some of the key findings of the study: The coaches' principal activities focused on meetings facilitation, conflicts among staff members, teacher-student interactions, and solutions to schoolwide dilemmas. The most frequently mentioned roles of a coach were to ask questions, to mirror the school culture for teachers, and to bring resources to teachers. (Contains 12 references.) (WFA)

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PROMOTING WHOLE SCHOOL REFORM:

A CLOSER LOOK AT THE ROLE OF EXTERNAL FACILITATORS

Paper presented at the

International Congress for School Effectiveness and Improvement (ICSEI)

Toronto

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PROMOTING WHOLE SCHOOL REFORM: A CLOSER LOOK AT THE ROLE OF EXTERNAL FACILITATORS

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Center for Collaborative Education

January 2001

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Educational initiatives have used coaches, or people positioned outside of schools and working within them, to effect change since the 1950s. They have been called "school change facilitators" (Williams 1996), "outside reformers" (McDonald 1989), and "external consultants" (Fullan 1991). External coaches serve several roles that those inside of the bureaucracy can not serve: they are objective and unbiased; they advocate for the school with the district, state, and other bureaucracies; and they have more flexibility to train and build networks with other schools (Hopfenberg 1995). In the current educational policy environment of the United States, external coaches are an increasingly integral part of school reform. This study seeks to expand upon existing research on what coaches do and how they do it (Sulla, 1998).

This paper examines the role of the coach at the Center for Collaborative Education (CCE), a non-profit organization whose mission is to work collaboratively with urban schools and districts to improve student learning by promoting and facilitating models of whole school reform. Central to CCE's work are coaches, external facilitators of change who, through their knowledge of the content and process of school reform, bring ongoing and intensive resources and skills to individuals within the school. CCE has been engaged in coaching schools in reform for more than three years. As a relatively new organization, CCE is continually engaged in the process of self-reflection and examination of its work. Consequently, this study serves two related purposes: (1) to contribute to a broader understanding of the role of external facilitators and outside organizations in school reform and (2) to provide a way for CCE staff to reflect upon how their work relates to the organization's theory of change.

CCE NETWORKS OF SCHOOLS

Positioned outside of school systems, CCE supports several networks of progressive, like-minded schools. These networks include schools both in the New England region and around the country (see Appendix A for more detail):

- Turning Points Network, a national middle school reform model;
- Massachusetts Coalition of Essential Schools Network, a regional center of the National Coalition of Essential Schools;
- Boston Pilot Schools Network, a network of eleven Boston Public Schools with charter-like autonomy; and
- Systemic Initiative in Math and Science Education (SIMSE), a network of Coalition middle and high schools engaged in science and math reform.

CCE CORE PRACTICES

Although CCE works with a number of networks of schools, the theory and nature of the work of CCE are consistent across them. Guiding CCE's theory of change are the empirical work of many researchers and practitioners, including Newmann (1996), Sizer (1991), and Levin (1991). Newmann found that reform is most likely to succeed when restructuring efforts focus on the intellectual quality of student and teacher life – the community of the school – rather than structural or technical changes. Sizer, too, theorized about the 'compromise' of teaching – too many distractions that take away from the core of school life, an intellectual community devoted to teaching and learning. Levin's work with the Accelerated Schools model contributes to our knowledge of how third party organizations support schools involved with reform. In addition, the Carnegie Corporation's report on young adolescent education (1989) has influenced the development of CCE's theory of change and core practices.

As an organization, CCE's believes that, "within the school, two foundations for successful change are (1) building a professional collaborative culture that is highly focused on improving learning, teaching, and assessment through such practices as looking collaboratively at student and teacher work, peer observations, text-based discussions, and shared leadership, and (2) data-based inquiry and decision making in which schools make thoughtful, deliberate decisions for school-wide improvement. In working for sustainable change, schools need to have the twin goals of high student achievement (high performance) and ensuring opportunity and success for every student (equity)."

The Center believes that school change is facilitated by collaborative work with schools in the following four school-based practices:

(1) **Building Leadership Capacity and a Professional Collaborative Culture**: Schools require strong, shared leadership to promote a professional collaborative culture. Schools in which faculty interaction is collegial, and teacher talk and collaborative work is focused on curriculum, instruction, and assessment, have experienced strong improvements in student achievement.

(2) **Improving Learning, Teaching, and Assessment**: Ultimately, student learning does not increase unless there is a continual focus on setting high expectations for each and every student, and providing ongoing support for teachers to improve their practice of teaching and assessing student learning.

(3) **Creating Structures to Support High Achievement**: High performing schools create structures that promote the conditions for high quality learning and teaching.

(4) **Data-based Inquiry and Decision Making**: Ongoing analysis of data from multiple sources provides a comprehensive picture of a school's strengths and challenges. School-wide participation in this inquiry process results in thoughtful decisions for improvement.

THE ROLE OF THE COACH

Central to CCE's model of whole school reform is the role of the coach, an external facilitator of change who brings resources, skills, and support to build the capacity of individuals within the school through her knowledge of the content and process of school reform.

CCE employs twenty coaches supporting approximately sixty schools in New England. CCE coaches work collaboratively with schools and advocate for the policies and support at the district and state level which will result in the autonomy and resources schools need to build systemic change (Rugen and Jones 2000). Coaches work intensively with each school roughly one day a week throughout the school year (three to four days per month), collaborating with faculty in different meetings, such as by whole staff, cluster, and/or grade levels. This ongoing, in-depth work with schools assures that a trusting relationship is built and that coaches and faculty get to know one another well. They may assist teachers in setting standards, developing curricula, promoting school-wide habits of mind, looking collaboratively at student work, conducting peer observations, collecting data about student performance, and scheduling for longer learning blocks.

GUIDING QUESTIONS OF THIS STUDY

Presented in this paper are preliminary results from an ongoing, long-term examination of the role of CCE coaches in facilitating whole school reform. This paper presents a glimpse into the work of coaches at a very specific time period in their work, both with schools and in their own understanding of coaching.

Five questions guide this longitudinal study, although two questions provide the focus for this paper. The five guiding questions are:

(1) How do coaches assist and enhance schools' efforts at reform?

(2) Which activities are most and least effective in improving school practice?

(3) What challenges do coaches face in their work and how are they resolved?

(4) What supports do coaches need to work consistently and effectively with schools to bring change? and

(5) How are coaches' activities grounded in CCE's core school-based practices?

This paper, then, focuses on only the following two questions:

- How do coaches assist and enhance schools' efforts at reform? That is, what kinds of activities do coaches engage in, how do these activities facilitate change, and what do coaches think about these activities.
- How are coaches' activities grounded in CCE's core school-based practices?

Using the CCE's core practices to frame the role of the coach, we begin to document how coaches view their role, begin their work in schools, and perceive the initial impact of their work.

METHODS/DATA COLLECTION

PARTICIPANTS

Eighteen coaches participated in this study. Coaches are professional educators who have taught and had experience with whole school reform. All CCE coaches have taught K-12, almost all for more than 5 years. In addition, several have school administrative experience, several have taught at the college level, and many have served as consultants on various educational reform issues. Coaches at CCE often work at more than one school. For particular schools,

coaches are either whole school change coaches or content coaches. For the purpose of this study, we assigned coaches only one school at which to document their work. Schools were chosen based upon two factors. First, that the coach worked with the entire school. However, there were three exceptions to this category, as three coaches work as 'content' coaches in all their schools, responsible for focusing on literacy, math, and/or science practices in the context of whole school reform. Second, we wanted the schools to be representative of the broad range of schools at which CCE coaches work.

Table 1 provides a breakdown of the demographics of the schools chosen for this study and the total number of schools at which CCE has coaches.

TABLE 1: DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF SCHOOLS CHOSEN FOR STUDY AND ALL SCHOOLS

	Coaching study	Coached by CCE	Percentage
School Level			
ES/K-8	4	13	31%
MS	12	26	50%
7-12/HS	2	9	22%
Geographic Type			
Urban	15	34	44%
Rural	2	6	33%
Suburban	1	8	13%
CCE Network			
Boston Pilot Schools	4	11	36%
SIMSE[1]	3	8	38%
CES[2]	3	17	18%
Turning Points	8	21	38%
Total schools	18	48	38%

[1] Systemic Initiative in Math and Science Education

[2] The Coalition of Essential Schools. Most Pilot Schools and all SIMSE schools are affiliated with CES but are not included as such in this count

CCE coaches also differed in their experience coaching and coaching at CCE. Table 2 shows a breakdown of their coaching experience, the length of service as coaches at CCE, and the length of time they were coaches at their assigned school.

TABLE 2: COACHES' DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

	Less than 1 year	1-2 years	2 or more years
Experience coaching	7	3	8
Length of service at CCE	10	4	4
Length of service at assigned school	14	1	3

CCE is a young, relatively new organization that has experienced rapid growth in staffing and programs recently. Sixteen of the eighteen schools were affiliated with CCE for less than three years, and the other two have been coached for five years.

DATA COLLECTION

This study collected data from three sources: Coaching logs, interviews with coaches, and observations of coaches in their schools.

COACHING LOGS

Each coach was required to complete a log for each activity in their assigned school. The coaching log (see Appendix B for a sample copy of a log form) required coaches to list information on who and how many people were involved in the activity, the length of the activity, the type of activity (such as a meeting or classroom observation), the content of the activity (such as whether they planned curriculum, discussed student work, or developed authentic assessments), and to note the resources used, if any. The log used underwent a few changes during the course of the data collection. While some changes were aesthetic, some affected the type of data collected. For example, halfway through data collection the resource section was added to include specific resource types. This study examined logs of coaching activities conducted during the 10-week period between October 2, 2000 and December 8, 2000. A

coach would typically have visited his or her school between 6-9 days during this period, given a 3-4 visit a month caseload.

Coach Interviews

Each coach was also interviewed about his/her experiences coaching, particularly regarding, but not limited to, their experiences at the assigned school. Coaches were asked about their experience as a coach, including their understanding of the role, development of goals, and challenges faced. Appendix C includes a copy of the interview protocol.

Observations Of Coaches

Each coach was observed for one full day of coaching in his/her assigned school. In order to develop a deeper understanding of the coach in the school context, researchers "shadowed" the coach for the full day, completing a coaching log for their observations but also providing more detail on the content of the activity, the reactions of the participants involved.

QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS FROM COACHING LOGS

Sixteen of the eighteen coaches (88%) turned in at least one completed log, for a total of 100 logs returned completed. Of those coaches who turned in at least one log, coaches completed and turned in from 1 to 13 logs (average =5.6 median=5.5).

From the 100 total logs turned in, coaches documented 342 activities. Coaches documented from 1 to 8 activities per coaching visit, with an average of 3.4 activities documented per day (median=3).

TYPES OF ACTIVITIES

The majority of activities documented by coaches were meetings (72%, or 246 meetings). Of the remainder of activities, 12% (40) were classroom based modeling or observations, 3% (9) were workshops, and 11% (38) were informal conversations.

The majority of meetings were with teachers only (53% or 129 meetings); 21% (51) of all formal meetings were only with administrators, and 27% (66) included both. Table 3 shows a breakdown of the types of meetings that coaches attended

with groups of teachers only, with teachers and administrators, and across both groupings.

TABLE 3: BREAKDOWN OF MEETINGS BETWEEN COACH AND GROUPS OF TEACHERS, TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS, AND BOTH GROUPS

MEETING TYPE	Teachers only		Teachers and administrators		Total	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Academic	89	69%	39	60%	128	66%
Subject area	18	14%	5	8%	23	12%
With an individual teacher	14	11%	N/a	N/a	14	8%
Critical friends group	0	0%	7	11%	7	4%
Leadership	0	0%	5	8%	5	3%
Full faculty	2	2%	2	3%	4	2%
Study group	1	1%	1	2%	2	1%
Other	5	4%	7	11%	12	7%
Total	129	100%	66	100%	195	100%

- Academic team: Two to six teachers who share the same students
- Critical friends group: Five to ten teachers who meet to talk about issues of teaching and learning
- Leadership team: Six to twelve members representing teachers of all grade levels, disciplines, specialties; administrators; family and community members
- Study group: Five to eight members (mostly teachers) who investigate topics related to teaching and learning based on data

Table 4 shows the administrators with whom coaches met. The table is divided into two sections. The first sections shows which administrators met with teachers and the coach together, and the second which administrators met with coaches alone.

TABLE 4: ADMINISTRATORS WHO MEET WITH COACHES

Administrator position	Meetings with Teachers and Administrators		Meetings with Administrators only	
	Number of times met with coach	Percentage	Number of times met with coach	Percentage
Principal	21	21%	32	51%
Curriculum Director	24	24%	8	13%
Upper/Lower school coordinator	15	15%	4	6%
Asst Principal	14	14%	3	5%
Math/literacy coach/coordinator	8	8%	9	14%
Student services	5	5%	0	0%
Guidance/counselor	4	4%	0	0%
Subject area facilitator	0	0%	4	6%
Bilingual specialist	2	2%	0	0%
Parent (PTA co-chair)	2	2%	0	0%
Superintendent	1	1%	1	2%
Other	6	6%	2	3%

When coaches met with teachers and administrators, coaches met with administrators from a wide variety of positions and responsibilities. That coaches met with teachers and the curriculum director or math or literacy coordinator suggests that meetings with teacher and administrators did focus on curricula content. When meeting with administrators without teachers present, coaches were most likely to meet with the principal. In both cases, coaches were most likely to meet with in-school rather than district level administrators.

Eleven of the fifteen coaches who completed more than one log noted that at least 75% of their activities were meetings with teachers and administrators (sixteen coaches turned in logs, but only fifteen turned in more than one; using only one log would bias the analysis). The remaining four coaches spent less than half of their time in meetings. Between the four, they observed classrooms

23 times (of 31 total occurrences), modeled lessons 5 of the 10 total times this activity was logged, and conducted 5 of the 9 workshops/trainings.

In addition, seven of the sixteen coaches logged that at least 20% of their activities were meetings with administrators only. Of those seven, four met at least half the time with the same administrator. Table 5 shows these four coaches and the number of times they met with the same administrator.

TABLE 5: COACHES WHO MEET WITH THE SAME ADMINISTRATOR

Coach	Number of meetings with administrators	Number of meetings with a specific administrator	Administrator's title
A	7	4	Principal
B	5	4	Curriculum Director
C	3	3	Principal
D	12	8	Principal
	12	3	Vice-Principal

COACH'S ROLE

Table 6 provides a breakdown of the types of roles that coaches assumed in their meetings with teachers only, teachers and administrators, and administrators only.

TABLE 6: COACHES' ROLE IN MEETINGS, BY ATTENDEE*

Role	Teachers only		Teachers and administrators		Administrators	
	Number of times met with coach	Percentage	Number of times met with coach	Percentage	Number of times met with coach	Percentage
Facilitator	96	74%	53	80%	9	18%
Co-facilitator	7	5%	8	12%	0	0%
Observer	3	2%	2	3%	0	0%
Participant	32	25%	16	24%	37	73%
Other	1	1%	0	0%	0	0%

* Coaches occasionally listed more than, or omitted listing, one role in a meeting, so figures do not add to 100%

When coaches met with groups of teachers, or with teachers and administrators, they were likely to assume the role of facilitator (74% of the time with groups of teachers, and 80% of the time with teachers and administrators). However, in meetings with only administrators present, coaches were more likely to take the role of participant. In most cases, coaches met one-on-one with administrators, and their meetings were characterized by give and take discussions.

CONTENT OF MEETINGS

This section presents findings based upon coach's reports of the content of meetings. Three tables are presented, listing the content of meetings with groups of teachers, with teachers and administrators, and with administrators only.

Table 7 presents a breakdown of main topics discussed at meetings with teachers only. Not surprisingly, meetings with groups of teachers were characterized by discussions of topics central to the classroom: Looking at Student and Teacher Work and Curriculum planning.

TABLE 7: CONTENT OF MEETINGS WITH TEACHERS ONLY

Activity	Number of occurrences	Percentage of occurrences
Looking at Student/Teacher work	44	34%
Curriculum planning	29	22%
Data-Based Decision Making	19	15%
Literacy	17	13%
Equity and expectations	13	11%
Check-in/planning/debrief	12	9%
Authentic assessments	11	9%
Collaborative Culture	5	4%

Table 8 presents the same data for meetings at which teachers and administrators were present. These meetings were similar to meetings with groups of teachers alone, with the topics most likely to be discussed also Looking at Student and Teacher Work and Curriculum planning. Note also that Table 6 showed that the coach's role (facilitator) in meetings with teachers and with teachers and administrators was the same.

TABLE 8: CONTENT OF MEETINGS WITH TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS

Activity	Number of occurrences	Percentage of occurrences
Looking at Student/Teachers work	17	25%
Curriculum planning	16	24%
Data-Based Decision Making	4	6%
Equity and expectations	4	6%
Authentic assessments	7	11%
Critical Friends groups	3	5%
School-wide improvement plan/goals	3	5%

Table 9 presents a breakdown of the main topics discussed at meetings at which only administrators were present. A different pattern emerges in these meetings, with the topic most likely to involve some element of planning (debriefing, checking-in, etc). Fifty-nine percent of all coaches' meetings with administrators involved this topic.

TABLE 9: CONTENT OF MEETINGS WITH ADMINISTRATORS ONLY

Activity	Number of occurrences	Percentage of occurrences
Check-in/planning/debrief	30	59%
Curriculum planning	7	14%
Literacy	6	12%
Equity and expectations	5	10%
Looking at Student/Teacher work	3	6%
Authentic assessments	3	6%
Data-Based Decision Making	3	6%

In meetings with teachers and administrators, meetings were typically conversations, but 16% of the time (31 occurrences) coaches introduced a protocol to structure the conversation. A protocol is guideline for structured conversation among colleagues, a conversation intended to improve assessment and instruction through reflection and collaboration. Table 10 lists the protocols and how often they were used (in three instances, no specific protocol was named).

TABLE 10: LIST OF PROTOCOLS AND INSTANCES OF USE

Protocol	Number of times used
Consultancy protocol	10
Text-based discussion	6
Leveling protocol	5
Guided discussion	2
Tuning protocol	2
Fishbowl	1
Embedded Model protocol	1
Writing rubrics	1

QUALITATIVE FINDINGS FROM COACH INTERVIEWS AND OBSERVATIONS

As the beginning of an ongoing study of coaching at CCE, this paper seeks to lay the framework for future papers. As such, we address two of the guiding research questions.

- What kinds of activities do coaches engage in which enhance schools' efforts at reform?
- How are coaches' activities grounded in CCE's core school-based practices?

The theory of change involves four crucial interacting elements, the core school-based practices: encouraging discussions of teaching and learning, building a professional collaborative culture, putting in place structures which make room for the preceding elements, and the use of data-based decision making .

To address the research questions, we needed to establish how coaches gained entry into a school and defined their role in the school. We present these findings as the baseline for discussing how coaches developed their goals, how they perceived initial changes in schools, and how they identified challenges to the reform. While CCE coaches' early work in schools proceeds as predicted by the research literature and in alignment with the core practices of school based

work, our findings identify some gaps where practice and theory do not yet correlate.

COACHES' ENTRY INTO THE SCHOOL CULTURE

As outsiders to the schools in which they work, coaches frequently mentioned becoming familiar with the school culture as an important first step in working in the school. Building insider status requires maintaining a delicate balance between gaining trust among faculty by being empathic and knowledgeable about their everyday challenges and pushing the external reform model's change theory. As shown previously in Table 2, fourteen of the eighteen CCE coaches have been at their "study school" only since Fall 2000. As such, they are all still easing their way into the schools in which they coach. Researchers asked them to describe how they were achieving integration and how they built trust among faculty. They described effective initial strategies for familiarizing themselves with the school context.

Effective Initial Strategies For Entering The School

Coaches' process of entry and familiarization with school context varied from formal to informal. A first task for all coaches was establishing their credibility as experienced educators. Some coaches achieved this through providing a letter of introduction (three coaches), telling school staff of their own experiences with school reform (four coaches), participating in the previous summer's work (four coaches), and being able to implement some positive concrete change or service early in the school year (four coaches). An example of a coach's early effectiveness follows:

> A cluster brought up the issue of constant interruptions in the school day by intercom, constant intercom messages. We talked about that, and without going through the [leadership team], it was just decided that they would attempt a system where announcements were only made at the beginning of the day and at the end of the school day. So that's actually happened now, so by having at least at least one or two concrete little victories in the school, people have seen that it is a possibility to have these discussions and have something concrete come out of it.

Second, coaches assessed the school's most immediate concerns using different methods. They interviewed school leaders (one coach) and conducted needs assessments of teachers (three coaches). The principal at one school identified key teachers in the school for a coach to contact. The coach's contact and initial conversations with these teacher leaders helped the coach develop a base of support within the school for the reform efforts and the work towards building a professional collaborative culture that the reform would entail. In addition,

these teacher leaders became the primary contact people for the coach's weekly check-ins. Another coach described short surveys she implemented in an effort to discover the immediate concerns of teachers in her school. Such a needs assessment demonstrated the coach's willingness to develop the work from teacher concerns rather than as a top down initiative, thus building buy-in for the reform effort. The data from the survey formed the basis for goal setting.

Ongoing Trust Building In A School

Besides the initial data gathering and establishing credibility within the school, coaches found several routine activities to be effective for learning about the school culture, such as meeting regularly with the principal and having informal conversations with teachers and administrators. In addition, coaches recognized the balance between listening to teachers' immediate, daily concerns with moving the reform agenda forward. These activities were grounded in several of CCE's core school-based practices, including building a collaborative culture and leadership capacity and promoting conversations about teaching and learning.

Principal Meetings

Most coaches quickly discovered the importance of the principal's buy-in for their integration into the school and for implementing the school reform model. As documented in the coaching logs, 21% of all coach's meetings occurred with only administrators. Further, as seen in Table 9, 59% of all meetings with administrators were about checking-in, debriefing, or otherwise planning reform activities.

Coaches' integration into a school depended in large part on the support of the principal for the reform model. Coaches' relationships with the principal not only formed the basis for modeling and helping to create a professional collaborative culture, but also became one of the most effective data gathering means for coaches to find out about the school context. In cases where the coach-principal relationship supported reform, coaches described principals who were aligned with the reform model's principles and practices and actively supported its implementation. In cases where the principal was not wholly committed, coaches discussed having difficulty moving teachers beyond a certain point.

Demonstration of principal support for implementation of the reform included attendance at grade level meetings, talking with resistant teachers individually, and meeting weekly with the coach to touch base on the reform work in the school. Principal support for the change effort resulted in greater capacity for building a collaborative culture in the school.

> I see that [the principal's] the one that is going to continue to build capacity within the teachers to be able to do this [reform work]. So, that's one thing. That I see [the curriculum coordinator] and the principal as capacity builders. So, that's one level of my job.

Informal Conversations

According to most coaches, a key to integrating into the school culture and building trust among faculty was the informal conversations they had in the hallways, cafeteria, office, copy room, or library. They occurred before and after school, and between classes and meetings. These conversations were unplanned, usually one-on-one, and often short. They built rapport and relationships with individual teachers and established the coach as a presence in the school. One coach gave an example of the role of informal conversations in improving the participation of a resistant teacher:

> There was one teacher who really kind of melted down in a meeting, and I followed up with her in the hall after, to see if she was okay. And it gave her a chance to vent about some of the district mandates, and pressure from the top. I was able to talk to her a little bit about my role in that, what it was and what it was not. But I think just even in terms of the fact that I listened to her [was important]. She felt better the next time she came in, and was more willing to be part of the group.

We should note that, according to coaching log documentation, informal conversations were not frequently reported (only 11% of the time). However, researcher observations of coaches in schools showed evidence of the prevalence of unplanned, one-on-one informal conversations. It appears that the activity is so frequent, coaches neglect to document it.

Opportunities To Air Concerns Balanced With More Focused Reform Work

As the above example illustrates, the coach created a space for teacher complaints and then steered the conversation to impact the subsequent reform work positively. In interviews, five coaches acknowledged the need to listen to teachers' concerns in order to learn about the school culture and gain the trust of teachers. Teacher concerns revolved around the harsh realities of teaching: discipline, motivation, expectations of students and teachers, and covering material. Finding the balance between allowing teachers to vent and moving them towards constructive conversations around these tough issues, as well as issues around instruction, was a constant tension for coaches.

> From my experience, teachers have to vent before thinking about new things. Venting paving way for deeper thinking. [As a coach, I] provide that opportunity.

> When they start griping and complaining, it's a balance between me lending an ear, and not cutting them off, but not letting them dump on me, or poison me. So I then question and make comments back to them, so they can see that my focus is moving forward, not being stuck.

In summary, coaches' integration involves initial needs assessments and ongoing meetings with the principal, giving space for teachers to air common challenges, and being available for impromptu, one-on-one conversations with teachers and administrators. Coaches viewed these activities as key to building trust and credibility among teachers by demonstrating empathy with their daily struggles. This trust and credibility were prerequisites for the coach to be able to perform any other role in the school's change efforts.

COACHES' INTERPRETATION OF THE ROLE

One coach used the word "chameleon" to characterize the many roles she plays in her school, and, in fact, all coaches interviewed described their role in multiple ways. Twelve of the fifteen coaches, however, specifically described their role as facilitating, guiding, or pushing change. In addition to describing themselves in this role, coaches also described other roles they assume in facilitating the change process. These roles included being an outsider and using that perspective to push for change, a provider of resources, a collaborator rather than an 'answer-giver', and a capacity builder.

FACILITATING CHANGE

More than half of the coaches named facilitating the change process as the essence of their job. Once coaches "know" their schools, they reported that they are able to assess where and how they can initiate the change process. Coaches facilitated meetings, conflicts among staff members, teacher-student interactions, and solutions to school-wide dilemmas.

> I really ask, listen, and look at what they want. And I bring that to the table. But I also think about how I can move them forward in thinking about their work, or empowering them to solve their problems, or solve challenges that they've brought to the table.

> You could ask me this on another day, and I'll probably have another answer. But for right now, the essence of the coach is one who's had enough experiences to be able to look at a school, make some assessments of where they are in light of our program's goals, see what the needs are, and begin to implement them at whatever level we can. Some things are within our control, some things are not. For those that are within our control and domain of change, to do that.

Having a good sense of the school culture allowed coaches to facilitate effective meetings and to mediate "sticky issues" and disagreements within the school objectively.

> On a practical level, the coach really acts as a facilitator and a guide; providing resources; gently pushing and supporting; asking questions; and helping to move the work of the school along; as well as, pushing whatever reform model...is what I'm there to do, but I need to integrate that in a way that fits with the school and the school culture. It can't be a cookie-cutter type of deal. So that's what I see my role as.

> I guess when I really feel I'm doing my best work as a coach is when I feel like I understand the way the school works, I see where there are needs, I know the difference between those things that I can deal with and those things that other folks need to be called in to deal with. And I'm able to stand back from the work and be clear about where I can be useful and where my boundaries are as a coach.

HAVING AN OUTSIDE PERSPECTIVE

Although an important task for coaches involved integrating themselves into the school community, their status as outsiders also greatly contributed to their effectiveness. According to coaches, the advantages of the outside perspective include maintaining objectivity and having enough distance from the school to see issues and possible solutions differently.

> If I can remain as an objective observer, I can really be valuable and give the school a lot of good insight and a lot of good information that they might not get from being so caught up in their work day in and day out. And sometimes they don't like that. It's true, that it can also be resented and so I also see myself as having to be a diplomat in the way in which I call attention to things that I see and hear.

> I really do see my role essentially as a guide, not as a source of power, not as a guru as much as just a guiding force and a reminding force of saying...of being observant about what's going on in the school and then calling it to the attention of the people there. And that's one of the blessings of being an outside person.

Coaches are then able to use their unique perspective in the school to push the thinking of teachers and administrators. Coaches discussed three ways in which they use their outsider status to do so. The most frequently mentioned roles of a coach were to ask questions, to mirror the school culture for teachers, and to bring resources to teachers. Coaches asked questions that were open-ended, provocative, and posed hypothetical situations. They portrayed scenarios that might complicate the situation being discussed. They noted that their questions might be more easily heard from an outsider than from someone on the school faculty.

> I guess I just ask them from what I know as a teacher, and being a coach. I asked questions that occur to me when I'm trying to think bigger picture. Sometimes I ask questions I know other groups would ask. I'll play devil's advocate. If it's a school reform issue that the principal is thinking about, then I might ask a question that a really seasoned veteran teacher who does not like school reform might ask, to think about how that plays out.

> You ask questions that tell you something about them, clarify where they're coming from, what they bring to it, what they find troubling, what they find challenging, and then you respond to that in ways that are really meaningful to them, always thinking of the [model's] principles, always thinking about, how can they think about this a little bit differently, or look at it deeper?

Second, four coaches used the analogy of being like a mirror to discuss their role and contributions as outsiders. As outsiders, they are able to reflect a school's culture, practices, and dynamics back to staff, of being "another set of eyes."

> I believe that coaches are there to mirror what schools say they want to do, and help them figure out ways to do that.

> I see the coach ... mirroring back, okay, if you choose this particular play, this is literally how it's going to play itself out. This is the end result. There's always helping them to think ahead.

PROVIDING RESOURCES

A practical advantage of being a school outsider is the coach's access to resources. The majority of coaches described one of their roles as providing information, books, and protocols related to their reform work. As conversations about teaching and learning became deeper, teachers depended on the coach for access to outside research on other schools and reform models.

> If you're engaging them as learners, then you're asking them to think more deeply, and think about their work. You're probably bringing readings or research to them that they probably wouldn't see if you didn't bring it to them. You're bringing ideas, strategies, teaching methodologies, whatever it may be, and asking them to do something with it. Something that they can go back and do something with.

COLLABORATING WITH SCHOOL FACULTY RATHER THAN BEING THE "EXPERT"

While four coaches specifically mentioned that they did not view themselves as experts, all coaches rarely described their role as that of expert. If they did, that role was only part of their function at a school. For example, three coaches considered themselves professional developers some of the time. They were asked to provide workshops on specific topics, such as interdisciplinary

curriculum development. In that sense, coaches must be prepared to be experts in the reform model's practices when called upon to do so.

However, consistent with the core school based practices promoted by CCE, the vast majority of role descriptions emphasized the collaborative nature of problem solving.

> Two people at that school, interestingly enough, with business backgrounds came up to me and said, "We thought you were a consultant. You'd come in and tell us what we were doing wrong, and you have a solution for us, and you tell us, this is what we need to do to make it right." And so it's been a question of just breaking down that mold, and saying, "That's not what we're about."

> I'm not trying to walk in and teach them things that they need to learn from my vast experience [laughter], but rather just to help mirror things that they're talking about, and help provide them with an extra body to facilitate that work.

The above quotes exemplify coaches' perception of themselves not as experts but as outsiders who could facilitate the change work. In coaches' work with schools, they provided the lens of the principles and practices of their particular reform model. They assisted staff in facing challenges in productive ways. They worked with the spectrum of staff, from engaged to resistant, both in groups and individually.

Consistent with their view of themselves as facilitators rather than as experts, one coach described her role as that of a "good teacher."

> For me, it's good teaching. It's figuring out where a person is, and collectively figuring out where the person wants to be. And the person might be the school, might be an individual, might be a department... The whole thing is engaging people as learners, and empowering teachers to solve their own problems, which means that helping them identify their problems, and then helping them to identify solutions.

Building Capacity

The role of an intermediary organization in building capacity for whole school reform is to institutionalize the core practices in the school to a point at which they do not require external coaching or facilitation. Six coaches said that building capacity is an integral part of their role. By knowing the school and faculty culture and modeling collaborative facilitation, coaches identified leaders within the school who might begin to facilitate meetings and discussions as coaches do.

> So one of my overall goals for any of my schools is to build capacity so that leadership comes from within and that my role eventually will be one of support as opposed to facilitating everything.

These coaches viewed building support for the reform implementation within the school, so that the model's principles and practices would be sustainable in their absence as their primary responsibility.

OVERARCHING GOAL OF BUILDING A PROFESSIONAL COLLABORATIVE CULTURE

The CCE theory of change holds that, in order to build capacity within a school for reform, a professional collaborative culture is required. A professional collaborative school culture is a group of professional educators who seek to answer questions about their work through collaboration with their colleagues, whose discussions are rooted in both theory and practice, and who are willing to explore diverse opinions in an effort to serve the needs of all students. Data suggests that coaches made building that culture in schools the guiding goal of their work.

> One of the things I did was [ask] "what does it mean to have a professional collaborative culture?" That was actually my personal goal to start off with because I saw that as kind of a launch pad for all the other goals. And I feel like right now...they're starting to develop a positive school culture.

> Well, what I say to myself is, how do I build professional collaborative culture with these teams, because I think it's very low, and how do I move their focus from – [for example], a conversation about [the statewide standardized assessment] that looks like teaching to the test, how do I shift from that to a conversation about teaching and learning that will have repercussions for [the statewide standardized assessment], where they'll feel that this is relevant to improving student scores on [the statewide standardized assessment].

> Yes, so the building capacity, not having to have an outsider come in but have the school culture be kind of imbedded and ongoing professional development with teachers. With teachers developing professionally together. So, I'm coming with that as a backdrop. I have a strong belief that that's important.

The above examples support the fact that coaches internalized the central role of professional collaborative culture in CCE's change theory. Building a professional collaborative culture in which the reform model could be implemented involved developing long term and short term goals for the school.

How Long-Term Goals Were Developed

In long-term, year-to-year goal-setting, coaches balanced the goals of the school reform model and core practices with the unique conditions of the schools in

which they worked. The coach assessed the school's readiness for implementation of different aspects of the reform model's practices.

Coaches most frequently mentioned using the model guidelines that the respective reform model, external to the school, promotes or has established. The guidelines come in several forms, all of which were cited by coaches as useful to goal setting.

- Principles: CCE's reform models operate on distinct but overlapping sets of principles which guide the coaches' and school's work. The principles encompass many domains of work—community level, school level, classroom level, student level.
- Benchmarks: Benchmarks are a formal set of criteria or standards of success upon which schools can systematically measure their progress in school reform.
- Roadmaps: Roadmaps chart the typical path schools would take to implement the model.

Coaches cited all three model guidelines for setting goals, with the model principles cited most often. Sometimes the needs and readiness of the school to tackle certain principles dictated what the goals were; schools prioritized the model's principles and focused on a subset of them in a given year.

> Well, everything I do is really through the lens of [the reform model.] It's one that I'm familiar with and knowledgeable about and it's also aligned with my philosophical beliefs so it's not hard. It makes sense to me and many of the practices are things that I have been doing as a teacher, as a staff member for years as well, so I also have the experience of having done them as a teacher.

> Well, I would say they directly relate in that all of the work we do on our roadmap is directly related to the Ten Common Principles of the Coalition, and so, for instance, the whole notion of looking at student work, it would be related to Principle #8: Teacher is generalist rather than specialist. And also to Principle #4 which is personalizing teaching and learning; looking at student work is one way that that really occurs quite specifically because of looking at the work of individual children and thinking about the teaching and learning that's gone on there to produce that work. So, I guess I would say that everything I do is related to the Ten Common Principles. Occasionally I am called upon to do things like facilitating meetings between faculty members and helping the principal with some of the sticky issues that come up. I see that as being related to the Ten Common Principles as being dealing with collaborative skills.

Long-term goal setting came primarily from the coach and the coach's knowledge of the school culture and readiness to tackle the model's principles. Coaches mentioned the role of leadership teams and whole school change plans infrequently in the long-term goal setting.

How Short Term Goals Were Established

While the coach's work toward long term goals for the school were determined from the coach and the reform model's principles, the coach's week-to-week work was determined by more practical events and had to be flexible and responsive to school conditions. The school's week-to-week needs were identified by individual teachers, teachers in team meetings (cluster, subject, and leadership teams), and principals. Most coaches met with their principals regularly and conferred about meeting agendas and goals and other support needed. They adjusted what their plans were based on issues that arose from the reform work.

> When I'm in there, I don't lose focus of [my goals], but I hear where the teams' needs are. And they may say, "We have a dilemma [to discuss] around a protocol. So I say, "Okay, let's bring your dilemma in for a protocol," so they can see that you're considering their agenda and not imposing yours. But I constantly encourage, and get them to switch gears, and eventually look at student work. Or if some conversation is coming up that we need some additional information or articles on, then I can suggest a text-based discussion. But it's based upon where their needs, what the goals are, and trying to meet them.

Coaches reported that often, meeting agendas were crafted around issues that arose from previous meetings. After a discussion of a problem, the coach figured out what was needed "to go forward with the goal" and "what the next step would be."

Just as frequently, the coach's week-to-week work was open enough to accommodate unforeseen dilemmas. The work developed as opportunities arose. A coach's flexibility and background knowledge came into play under these circumstances. The coach had to be able to respond quickly to new needs or requirements by providing the appropriate facilitation or resources.

> Well, I don't really decide [week to week goals], the [leadership] team that I work with decides that...We meet every Thursday...[and] decide, we kind of construct the agenda together, at the end of each meeting. And so, most of the time there's some kind of sharing about the work that they are doing.

> So when you meet in grade level teams, you might want to say, "This is the data." We might share data. We might just have conversations about what's happening in their classroom, or some next steps. Or literature review, we did along with the action research project. So one thing leads to another. It's something you build on.

The findings suggest that coaches' goals integrated the reform model's externally derived principles and practices with the school's current context. The long term goals were driven more by the former, and the week-to-week goals by the latter. Coaches reported balancing the "roadmap" of the reform model and being responsive to the daily life of teaching. They were prepared to use daily

moments of teaching dilemmas as grist for encouraging the conversations about teaching and learning that CCE's theory of change promotes.

EARLY CHANGES OBSERVED IN COACHED SCHOOLS

In the course of this long-term study, we plan to track changes reported by coaches and school staff over time. Although coaches had been at their schools for only a short time, they reported seeing some results from their work. This section summarizes coaches' reports of their first semester of work with a school. Future reports will track these coaches through their second and third years with their schools. Through such longer term analyses, coaches and model developers may begin to understand and refine their goals, the content of their work with schools, and the theory of change.

At the beginning stages of any reform effort, small changes rather than deep changes take place. Developing a professional collaborative culture starts with individual relationships. Researchers observed changes on the level of building relationships with the principal, teacher leaders in the school, and a few receptive individual teachers.

THE STRUCTURE OF MEETING TIME

One early change coaches reported was an increase in formal meeting time, which was crucial to coaches' goals of building professional collaborative culture. Again aligned with the CCE theory of change and core practices, the newly created structure of staff meeting opportunities was instrumental in the coaches' early work. The purpose of meeting time was to provide opportunities for conversations about teaching and learning. These conversations became more frequent as teachers formed the habit of talking about instructional issues.

While we asked coaches about their perceptions of change since they had started working with the school, we acknowledge that the kind of change the school reform models promote is dramatic and takes years to achieve. The most frequently cited changes were structural ones—the creation of faculty meeting time and/or increased participation at meetings. Coaches advocated for more meeting time in their schools, and as a result, extra time was created for professional development, common planning time, and leadership team meetings. In addition, some coaches reported that teachers attended these meetings more regularly and punctually, suggesting that they found value in them.

> There is change in the sense that people are coming to meetings, and people are enthusiastically coming to meetings. Some people, like I say, come armed with

> student work. So there is already a sense that they're having more of a voice. They were very surprised when I managed to get administrators to the meetings, and surprised that the principal was receptive too. Because I said to him, "It would be good– We would like you– At certain points, we would like having an administrator there." And he came to the very next meeting, that afternoon. And the following week, in two out of the three cluster meetings, there was an administrator in the meeting. And the teachers were kind of surprised, and I explained that this is the model, and why it's useful for them to be there. So on those, just in that sense, there has already been some change in the school.

Conversations About Teaching And Learning

Another early change in school culture noted by more than half of the coaches was the increased frequency of both structured and informal conversations about teaching and learning. As noted previously, coaches documented in their logs that meetings with teachers focused on looking at student and teacher work and curriculum planning (see Table 7).

In one example, through the coach's work with faculty on interdisciplinary science units, teachers started thinking about how one grade level's science fair could better reflect student questions. Previously, they observed that science fair projects reflected parents' work. The changed approach created an opportunity for dialogue about student learning:

> ...for the science fair, I actually think that the fact they were meeting regularly–and they eat together at lunch–but instead of just sitting down in the lunchroom talking about how they kind of wished the science fair would be different, they took one of these meetings and said, "You know, I've been thinking, I kind of wish the science fair would be different." And the other teacher's like, "Oh yeah, me too, wouldn't that be great?!" And then they used that time to really put something together...it was great. I mean, all of the teachers said it was so much better than what it had been. It wasn't necessarily as flashy as it had been, but they said, like, in terms of what the kids were doing, it was much better. And they said–they thought that the kids really felt a whole lot more ownership than they had in the past.

As the above example illustrates, the increase in faculty meeting time implies an increase in the opportunities for conversations about teaching practice. As school cultures changed, coaches provided the tools with which to have those conversations in effective and productive ways.

> I think [the conversations] are promising. They feel like the right kind of conversation. I feel relieved that they had conversations about the hard parts of teaching, like, how do you assess kids? How do you teach a kid to write persuasively? What is the role of the science teacher in teaching kids to read and write? Those feel like the right conversations.

CHALLENGES TO BUILDING A PROFESSIONAL COLLABORATIVE CULTURE

In building professional collaborative cultures in their schools, coaches faced barriers that were both structural and attitudinal. Coaches reported that it was difficult to schedule enough time for both teacher collaboration and teacher-coach work. Coaches also noted that teacher buy-in and multiple new initiatives hindered the reform work.

INCREASING TIME FOR TEACHERS TO COLLABORATE

Coaches struggled to create the time for teachers meet with one another, a first step in developing a professional collaborative culture. CCE's reform models encourage teachers to meet with their grade level counterparts, their subject area counterparts, and their peers across grades. Formal meeting times for all these configurations was difficult to achieve in most schools. In addition, schools were most likely to use specialists to cover classes to allow for teachers to meet, further complicating the dilemma of how to integrate specialists into these meetings.

Even when meeting times are in place for these groups, many of the meetings are not long enough to conduct deep conversations about teaching and learning. Meeting times are typically less than 45 minutes, and teachers still need time to transition their students at the beginning and end of the period. Further, meetings with coaches are usually only once a week, hindering continuity of conversations focused on teaching and learning. Coaches reported that meetings focused on teaching and learning are more frequent when they were present. A challenge is to develop the capacity of teachers to discuss concerns about their practice in the absence of the coach.

INCREASING TIME FOR COACHES TO WORK WITH INDIVIDUAL TEACHERS

Meetings are not the only time coaches interact with teachers. As coaches get integrated into the school, they are often asked to observe individual teachers and provide feedback. Scheduling these observations and debrief sessions among the meetings and classes was a challenge reported by several coaches.

> That's also been the place that people have started saying, "Oh, you can come into my classroom this afternoon if you want," which is always– What I have found is that it's very difficult to find time to be able to [conduct] structured observations. That a lot of the teacher's time is used for teaching time, and then team time or free time to be able to sit down before a lesson, talk about what their intentions are for the lesson and have me come in and observe and then follow up later on with that.

Researchers observed several debriefing sessions between coach and teacher after a lesson observation. The content of these conversations supported the notion that they were valuable tools to deepen conversations about teaching and learning. When they found the time, coaches were able to develop one-on-one relationships with individual teachers, ask probing questions, and encourage reflection on classroom practice.

Reduction of Multiple, Fragmented Initiatives At Schools

Coaches reported that teachers felt pulled in multiple directions by the many initiatives going on in their schools. The CCE reform work is often not the only demand on teachers' non-teaching time.

> Most of the feedback that I've gotten is the teachers don't know what to do with all the things that they're supposed to do. They've got all these different reading programs that keep being introduced. And they don't know how they fit together.

> "Initiatives" are a dirty word there because there are so many.

> I get a little nervous about how much, how many initiatives this school's taken on. Some of them are related to getting grant money, which I appreciate; they need the money and they'll take it wherever they can get it. But it puts a huge load on the faculty. So I worry that some of the progressiveness can lead to just wearing people out. There is so much going on. So that's a challenge for me to try to continuously remind them what their focus has to be and should be and to zero in on the essential things.

The coach in the above quote describes her role as helping the school focus in the face of multiple change initiatives. This challenge confirms our findings that the role of the coach is to balance the requirements of building a professional collaborative culture with the school context and daily needs of teachers.

Increasing Teacher Buy-In

A major challenge to the work of creating professional collaborative culture in the coaches' schools was the resistance of teachers to change. Not only do lack of time and the presence of multiple initiatives contribute to teacher resistance, but also teacher attitudes which stem from a history of working in isolation, with a history of seeing many initiatives come and go with little impact, and with a dominant paradigm of teaching as "delivering information/knowledge" rather than guiding students' learning.

> My particular bias is that I feel like the [district] mandates really get in the way of being able to do work teachers find authentic and relevant to what they're doing in their classrooms. Because they're told what they have to do and how often, and in what meetings, they really don't have flexibility to ask their real questions, and I feel the more genuine their questions were, and the more genuine the work was that we were looking at– If teachers were coming to the table really wanting to find out about something, and we could go with that, I think that we could move a lot faster, and farther. And that would help build credibility as well.

> I mean, it's a great faculty, but there are some – I mean, they're all very strong people, and they all kind of have their own ideas. And there are some great teachers, but they're very much of the mentality that "I just do my own thing." And they don't look at the work of others kind of with a critical eye to themselves; they look at the work of others with a critical eye to the work of others, and say, "Well, that's not how I would have done it, I would have done it this way." Which has its value, I mean, it's getting out there some of the ideas that have been happening in their classrooms all along, but I still think there are some people who are kind of like, "Yeah, but I do it my way."

> I think there's a lot of teachers here that are uncomfortable with changing their style of teaching. And if we do go more towards a Coalition model, they're going to need to see themselves more as facilitators. And I really don't think people will let go in that way. I think it will be a teacher led school. I don't see that changing in a big way. Maybe in one or two classes, but I think that's a roadblock.

Increasing teacher buy-in for building a professional collaborative culture requires that school and district conditions are conducive to creating that culture. At the school level, data from coaches suggests that finding times for teachers to meet in groups and individually with coaches posed a structural challenge. Coaches were in schools less than one day a week and those days usually included back-to-back meetings. Any in-between time for classroom observations and conversations with teachers was too limited for regular, deep conversations. At the district level, new initiatives often placed extra burdens on teachers. These burdens affected their attitudes towards the whole school reform models that CCE coaches supported.

DISCUSSION

This first in a series of reports on coaching at CCE examined the work of eighteen coaches in promoting whole school change. Findings in this report form the baseline for future studies delving into which coaching practices are most effective in school reform.

As a growing, maturing third party organization, CCE needs to reflect on its theory of change and the nature of school-based coaching work. Several themes

emerged from this initial analysis of early coaching work in schools implementing whole school reform models. We discuss and analyze these themes using CCE's four core school-based practices as a framework: building a professional collaborative culture; promoting conversations about teaching, learning, and assessment; developing structures which promote a professional collaborative culture; and using school-wide data-based decision making.

HOW COACHES WORK TO BUILD A PROFESSIONAL COLLABORATIVE CULTURE

THE COACH AS A FACILITATOR RATHER THAN AN EXPERT

Although schools often expect external consultants to present answers to school-wide dilemmas, coaches rarely described their role as that of an expert. If they did, that role was only part of their function at a school. Several coaches reported providing workshops to schools as professional development. In that sense, coaches were prepared to be experts in specific areas of teaching and learning. The vast majority of role descriptions, however, emphasized the collaborative nature of problem solving, with the coach's contribution being that of the outside perspective and the advantages that perspective entails.

Extending the finding that coaches perceived their role as that of a good teacher, coaches are to schools what teachers are to classrooms. Good teachers are generalists rather than specialists, facilitators of student learning rather than information givers. Good teachers work with diverse populations of students. Their job is to engage all students in meaningful learning. Similarly, coaches engage school faculty in inquiry about their school culture, classroom practice, and student learning.

This finding that coaches considered themselves collaborators and facilitators of reform rather than expert outsiders has several implications for their practice. Through modeling and creating a collaborative school culture with faculties, coaches built the capacity for schools to work on the reform in a sustainable way. By gaining partial insider status, balancing sensitivity to school context and faculty readiness with moving the reform agenda forward, and working in collaboratively in decision making, coaches helped to ensure that changes would become sustainable. Over the long term, sustainability would require a deliberate stepping back from a hands-on role facilitating the change process.

The finding that coaches brought outside resources and information otherwise inaccessible to busy staff and provided professional development suggests that CCE coaches, while acting in collaborative ways, possessed expertise that schools called upon. Documenting the variety and depth of expertise related to

CCE's school-based core practices would be useful in responding efficiently to school needs.

The Coach Balancing Pushing The Reform Agenda And Supporting The Immediate Needs Of Faculty

"Pushing" was a term coaches used frequently to describe their role, meaning that it was their role to introduce teachers to new tools and concepts embedded within the reform model, even when teachers had initial discomfort with them. However, coaches also noted that daily dilemmas were often at the forefront of teachers' minds when they entered team meetings, such as discipline problems or lack of substitutes. Often teachers were not ready to entertain a new reform idea, such as using multiple sources of data to engage in data-based decision making. Consequently, coaches faced the quandary of what the right balance is between when to push the reform agenda and when to support the immediate needs of faculty.

> I think the coaching role is a lot about when to push and when not to, and different coaches push based on their own background and comfort.

For several coaches, their personal and educational backgrounds contributed to their decisions about when to push and when not to. While a coach's experiences can be an advantage, for example if a coach's background in diversity issues enables him/her to more easily raise these issues in a team meeting when discussing student work, they could also potentially inhibit coaches who may not have the background and comfort level in, for example, issues related to diversity, to raise them with teachers.

Finally, staff experiences around CCE's core school-based practices vary, which may also influence their comfort level of when to push the reform agenda and when to delay.

These findings have implications for both coaches and for CCE as an organization. Coaches may ask themselves what the right times to push and the right times to support the immediate needs of faculty are. They may examine their own unique perspectives and how those perspectives enhance or hinder their reform work. CCE may take from these findings new challenges about how to help coaches understand how their backgrounds influence their comfort level in pushing faculty to new understandings and skills and how to better support coaches so that they have high comfort levels that enable them to better know when to push and when not to. These questions form the basis for ongoing discussions at CCE and future research on coaching.

THE COACH'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE PRINCIPAL

In order for coaches to help schools implement the school reform model, they reported that getting to know the school and its culture was the most important first step. The coach's integration into a school, the gradual movement from outsider to partial insider, depended upon effective initial strategies as well as ongoing trust building. Coaches reported their integration dependent on regular meetings with the principal. According to coaching logs, the major content of administrator-coach meetings was checking in, planning, and debriefing (Table 9).

The coach's regular interactions with the principal were important because they enhanced principal buy-in for the reform in three ways: building a relationship, collaborating in the reform work, and increasing administrators' knowledge of the reform model. Data suggested that principals played important roles in developing teacher buy-in. Principals explained to teachers the importance of participating in the variety of reform activities, encouraged regular meeting attendance, and modeled good relationships with coaches. The stronger the principal relationship with the coach, the more capacity for sustained change within the building.

Since principals play a pivotal role in building capacity for reform (Fullan 1991, Newmann 1996), the coach's relationship with the principal requires further study. We are particularly interested in how coaches push the thinking of principals—at all levels of buy-in—to more fully understand and embrace the reform model. Knowing how this relationship develops has many implications for working with a school, such as whether CCE should even send coaches to schools where the principal is not actively supportive of the reform model or what change in their school would help to convince principals to fully embrace the reform.

HOW COACHES PROMOTE CONVERSATIONS ABOUT TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

HOW DO DEEP CONVERSATIONS LEAD TO CHANGES IN CLASSROOM PRACTICE?

According to coaching logs, most conversations in meetings were about looking at student and teacher work and curriculum planning (Tables 7 and 8). These topics are central to teaching, learning, and assessment. Coaches believed that they were essential to facilitating those conversations in the early stages of implementation. From their logs, we know that coaches facilitate 74% of meetings with teachers.

> I can make conversations happen, but it's me making them happen.

Do these conversations influence classroom practice? Are teachers who engage in frequent and deep conversations about their practice more effective in increasing student performance? When asked about observed changes, coaches did not name student engagement or achievement as outcomes of their work.

> I don't know that anything is hugely different in the schools except that I do think that teachers having regular conversations about teaching and learning, even if it's only happening once a week, is a lot better than it not happening at all. And I would hope, although I haven't had a lot of opportunities to get into classrooms, I would hope that if it hasn't started to transfer into instruction that it will soon, even for like one person. And that in itself is a long process. There are schools that have been doing this for a long time and it hasn't really had much impact on classroom instruction.

Coaches reported that, given time constraints and the role of coaching for whole school change, they had little time to observe classes. These constraints meant that coaches had to infer the effect of conversations about teaching and learning through the quality of discussion at meetings and the quality of teacher and student work that teachers brought to meetings. Other ways to assess the reform's impact on classroom practice include school wide surveys, student work and performances, and teacher peer observations, but coaches did not report using these strategies. One possible reason could be that these schools were early in their implementations, so the structures were not yet in place for these activities.

Future research will address how to encourage and facilitate conversations of depth about important issues around teaching, learning, and assessment. An important role of the coach is to build the school's capacity to have those conversations.

Coaches' Work With Groups Versus Individual Teachers; In Classrooms And In Meetings

Data from coaches suggested that deep conversations about teaching and learning were at the heart of building a professional collaborative culture. But coaches wondered where and how deep conversations could best be created and sustained. Coaches worked with teachers in groups and individually, in their classrooms and in meetings. Coaching log documentation showed that 75% of coaching time in schools was at meetings, and that in meetings with teachers the topics were issues central to teaching and learning. Creating regular meetings for various groups of teachers, such as grade level clusters, leadership teams, and subject teams, contributed to the increased frequency of these conversations over ones about discipline and administrative details. Meetings also can lead to

more conversations with teachers who might follow up individually with a coach on issues raised at meetings. Further, coaches reported and coaching observations also confirmed that, at this early stage in the reform process, conversations with individuals were more substantive and tackled challenges at the heart of instruction more than those in groups. The prevalence of school level meetings with groups rather than with individuals led us to wonder how classroom observations fit into the model of whole school reform.

Four coaches reported observing classes or modeling lessons as a way of building relationships with individual teachers. Early in the coach-teacher relationship, modeling lessons builds trust with teachers by reversing the roles, shows teachers what coaches can provide, and makes places for the teacher to connect with the coach in deep conversations. There was a sense among some coaches that since the heart of teaching is in the classroom, reform must also be located in the classroom. One coach described the dilemma of working with individuals or whole schools.

> And so I guess when I look at what's most helpful to teachers in general, I'm not thinking about going into classrooms to [help them]; it would be finding ways of releasing teachers from their classroom [to observe each other]. The teacher benefits a heck of a lot from having somebody come in, observe and then talk afterwards....But, that teacher can leave [the school]. So, you might have helped that teacher think who his or her practice. And you haven't done anything to institutionalize this kind of culture in the school. So, [the balance] is something that I wrestle with, and I don't have a really good answer for what it is.

Coaches reported that working with individuals and working with groups is essential to reform. Further, many coaches also believed that working in meetings and in classrooms were also essential. These observations have led us to question if both need to occur, and if so, how might coaches find the balance between working with groups and individuals, and working through meetings or in classrooms. In addition, we wonder what structures might be created to support such balance, and how coaches can work to develop those structures. For example, coaches have created meeting times with teachers to have discussions. A structure suggested by the quote above is that of peer observation of teaching, an activity that if implemented school-wide allows work with all teachers in classrooms.

HOW COACHES BUILD SCHOOL STRUCTURES

One school structure that coaches frequently discussed was formal meeting time for different groups of teachers. The changes reported by coaches in their first few months in schools included increasing time for teachers to meet and collaborate, and directly related, having more conversations about teaching and

learning. As they assessed changes which had occurred in schools, they cited increased meeting times as providing the opportunity to have conversations about teaching and learning. This finding is consistent with CCE's reform models. Central to building a collaborative culture is creating time for teachers to collaborate. These meetings thus provide the foundation for discussion among teachers around issues of teaching and learning.

Other structural changes promoted by CCE reform models that are conducive to improved student learning, such as eliminating tracking and ability grouping, lowering student-teacher ratios, and building parent/community partnerships were not reported by coaches in early implementation stage goals, changes, or challenges. This finding makes sense, since our study focuses on early implementation of whole school change.

While meeting times are promoted as central to building a collaborative culture, a surprising finding was that only four coaches named meetings as important to their integration in schools. Data suggests that gaining trust happens primarily through other activities, such as summer professional development with full faculties or summer meetings with key individuals. The coach's tension is to balance facilitating meaningful conversations with groups and gaining trust with individuals. CCE should consider ways for the coach and teachers to meet before the school year begins to build relationships and trust.

HOW COACHES USE DATA-BASED DECISION MAKING WITH SCHOOL STAFF

The majority of coaches did not report implementing the core practice of data-based decision making in their schools. Data-based decision making is the process by which school staff set a vision, collect and analyze data, identify the difference between vision and current practice, set priorities for change, and state measurable goals. Data-based decision making can be done by individual teachers and at the school-wide level.

At the individual/small group level of data-based decision making practice, looking collaboratively at student and teacher work was the most frequent content of meetings that coaches facilitated. The goal of looking at student and teacher work is to help teachers to understand and know what students are able to do, align curriculum with frameworks, assess academic growth over time, and design instructional practices to reach all students.

Surprisingly, though, relatively few coaches discussed this practice during interviews. Further, only one coach linked the practice of looking at teacher and student work as a component of data-based decision making. Instead, coaches consider looking at student and teacher work a foundation of building a

collaborative culture through promoting conversations about teaching and learning.

In addition, little evidence suggested that coaches were using this core practice at the school level. Only two coaches discussed school-wide data-based decision making in relation to their long term goals for the school; they framed their work around encouraging that practice. More extensive and detailed work around data-based decision making, as emphasized by CCE's theory of change, was lacking.

That data-based decision making is not happening consistently at either the individual/small group or school-wide level is of great concern for the development of the reform models. There are two possible reasons for the lack of emphasis on data-based decision making. First, it may be that this practice occurs later in a coach's work with schools. These schools were in early stages of implementation. Further, one of CCE's reform models (Turning Points) requires that each school staff member and student complete a school self-study survey every two years. This survey provides the data for school staff to reflect upon their practices. The timing of the implementation of the survey occurs in the spring; this study covers work in the fall.

The second possible reason might be the difficulties of implementation of the model. Teachers are not experienced at being involved in this process, and may not see the relevance of this process to their daily work. They might need more time to be convinced that school wide data-based decision making, which requires the gathering of many sources of data, will be useful to improving instruction. Also, CCE coaches may not feel comfortable facilitating data-based decision making and need more professional development on how to support it in schools.

We need to monitor the use of data-based decision making during the current year, focusing on whether the lack of use of this core practice is due to problems with its implementation or that this practice occurs later in the school year.

LIMITATIONS

This paper reports on the beginning of a long term study of coaching at CCE. It covers the work of eighteen coaches during the time they were in the assigned school. Fourteen of these coaches were in their first school year in the school. They described their work during this school year and completed logs for ten weeks during the fall. This study does not address how coaches' work changed over time. It documents the early work and effects of the work as perceived by coaches. We anticipate documenting the later stages of coaches' work in schools and the longer term effects of reform in subsequent studies.

This initial study also does not include data on the school administration and faculty experience and perception of the coach's role in their school's reform. Future studies will address these questions through interviews with school staff and more extensive observations of the coach in the school context.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS

The mission of the Center for Collaborative Education (CCE) is to improve student learning in K-12 public schools and districts by promoting models of whole school reform that are focused on school and system-wide change and instructional improvement. The Center seeks to influence the larger public's view on education to better support change that fosters democratic and equitable schools. The Center for Collaborative Education's goal is to be a resource and catalyst for the creation of schools in which:

- Learning is purposeful, rigorous, and related to the real world,
- Assessment demonstrates that students can do important things,
- Teachers and students know each other well,
- Diversity is respected and equity is embedded in all practices,
- Democratic values are nurtured and modeled, and
- Flexibility and autonomy enable decisions to be made as close to the learner as possible.

The Center currently coordinates four school reform networks, a systemic math-science network, and a principal preparation program. Within each of the networks, the Center provides schools with coaching, technical assistance, professional development, political advocacy, and networking opportunities. Besides its network activities, the Center also provides consultant services to districts, schools, and other education organizations undertaking whole school change initiatives.

- **Boston Pilot Schools Network**: These 11 schools, while members of the Boston Public Schools, have freedom over budget, staffing, governance, curriculum/assessment, and the school calendar. Models for the future of urban public schools, the Pilot Schools are all small, personalized, and democratic. The Center serves as the coordinating organization for the Pilot Schools.
- **Coalition of Essential Schools Network** (CES): The Center serves as the state-wide regional center for those schools affiliated with the national Coalition of Essential Schools reform initiative. Coalition schools organize learning, teaching, and assessment around ten common principles, including students learning to use their minds well, "less is

more," personalization, student as worker, and exhibitions as demonstration of mastery. Currently, there are 35-40 Coalition-affiliated schools in the state.

As part of the CES network, the **Systemic Initiative in Mathematics and Science Education** (SIMSE) consists of eight Coalition of Essential Schools' middle and high schools that are committed to ensuring that all students are enrolled in rigorous math and science courses of study, and that they are provided with the necessary support to be successful.

- **National Turning Points Network**: The Center for Collaborative Education serves as the National Turning Points Center, a national, New American Schools-recognized reform model for creating high-performing middle schools, based on the principles and practices for effective middle schools outlined in the national *Turning Points* report (Carnegie Foundation, 1989). Member schools engage in improving learning, teaching, and assessment, building a professional collaborative culture, engaging in data-based inquiry and decision making, and creating structures that support high achievement and personal development.

  The Center also coordinates a **New England Turning Points Network** of 25 schools, which serves as a lab site for the national network, as well as a growing national network of four other regional centers that support Turning Points schools.

- **New England Small Schools Network** (NESSN): This center assists New England and upstate New York districts to start up new small secondary schools or to divide large comprehensive schools into smaller, autonomous schools. The Center's work is built on the mounting evidence that small, personalized, and democratic schools are more effective in educating the diverse range of students we serve than are large, more impersonal schools. The Center will assist in the creation of up to 20 new small schools over the next five years, and operate as a clearinghouse of information and resources on the small schools movement.

- **School Leadership Project** (SLP): The School Leadership Project is an apprenticeship model of principal preparation and certification, and is a regional site for the Rhode Island-based Big Picture Company's Aspiring Principal Program. This principal preparation program is based on the belief that the best method of preparing new, innovative school leaders is to train them in schools that are engaged in real reform work. Aspiring principals are placed in the Center's Pilot, Coalition, or Turning Points schools, are mentored by a Distinguished Principal for a period of 15-18 months, and engage in the work of the school. Each candidate has an

individual learning plan to master a set of identified competencies that prepares him/her for the principalship.

Across its networks, the Center's Research and Evaluation Program studies how network schools are progressing and improving student learning. The results of these studies are shared with the educational community and the public to promote models of democratic and equitable schools.

APPENDIX B: COACHING LOG

Coach: ☐ Date ☐
School ☐ Time of activity ☐
☐

Attendance

TEACHERS

Number ☐

Grade ☐

ADMIN/SPECIALISTS/ OTHER STAFF (type and number)

Coaches Role

Facilitator ☐
Co-facilitator ☐
Observer ☐
Participant ☐
Other _____ ☐

Type of Activity

MEETING

Academic team ☐
Leadership meeting ☐
Full faculty ☐
Study Group ☐
Subject area ☐
Critical Friends group ☐
With Administrator ☐
Informal conversation ☐

MEETINGS (cont)

An individual teacher(s) ☐
Other_____ ☐

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Model classroom lesson ☐
Observe classroom lesson ☐
Workshop/Training ☐
Other _____ ☐

Content and Structure of Activity and Use of Resources

Content

Looking at Student/Teacher work ☐
Equity and expectations ☐
Curriculum planning ☐
Data-based Inquiry and DM ☐
Authentic assessments ☐
Literacy ☐
Scheduling ☐
Habits Of Mind ☐
Grouping of students ☐
Other_____ ☐

Structure

Text-based discussion ☐
Group Discussion ☐
Protocol (denote type) ☐
Other _____ ☐

Resource

Collaborative Culture/ Shared Leadership Guide ☐
LASTW Guide ☐
DBDM Guide ☐
Benchmarks Guide ☐
Curriculum Development Guide ☐
TP Overview ☐
Literacy Guide ☐
School Structures Guide ☐
Other _____ ☐

Description of activity:

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Demographics

- How many years have you been a coach? Here and at other organizations?
- How many schools do you coach?
- How long have you coached at this school?

Background and evolution of group and coaches' role in the group

- How did you go about getting integrated into this school? How did you gain trust?
- How were you introduced to the teachers, and what were they told about your role?
- Do you think your (perceived) age has affected the ease of your integration into the school, the staff acceptance of you as a coach?
- How many other CCE staff coach in this school? In what ways do you collaborate with them?

Coaches' goals

- How do you determine your goals in this school day-to-day? Yearly?
- How do your goals relate to the principles (and practices) promoted by your whole school reform model?

Coaches' perception of change in the school

- How far have you moved towards reaching these goals?

(if not far– What challenges and roadblocks do you see affecting your work?)

(if progress made, then:

- What is different in the school now than when you first came aboard?
- Are your relationships with teachers different now?
- Do you think that your conversations with teachers are 'deep?' How often and how deep? How do you push teachers to think deeply?
- What challenges and roadblocks do you see affecting your work?

Essence of the coach

- How would you describe your role as a coach?
- What is the 'essence' or the 'central role' of the coach?

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